

5 September 2022

**Open Letter from CIEEM to An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, and Minister of State for Heritage at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Malcom Noonan TD: Biodiversity and economics are one and the same; a healthy environment underpins a thriving economy**

Dear Taoiseach and Minister Noonan

The undersigned, being Vice President for Ireland, a Chartered Ecologist, a Member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), who are senior experts in the management and protection of biodiversity urge you to engage fully with the upcoming 15th Conference of the Parties on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15).

**Why a Biodiversity Emergency?**

The catastrophic global loss of biodiversity is well documented in reports such as the *State of Nature*<sup>1</sup>, the *European Environment: State and Outlook 2020*<sup>2</sup>, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*<sup>3</sup>, WWF's *Global Futures*<sup>4</sup>, and the Environmental Audit Committee's *Biodiversity in the UK: Bloom or Bust?*<sup>5</sup>. This loss has direct negative effects on the economy.

The World Economic Forum estimates that over half of global GDP relies on what nature provides<sup>6</sup> and that 44% of the GDP of cities is at risk of disruption resulting from the loss of nature<sup>7</sup>. Biodiversity loss clearly threatens the wellbeing and prosperity of both current and future generations.

Ireland has recognised that biodiversity must be mainstreamed into decision-making across all sectors so we trust that the Irish Government can appreciate that restoration of biodiversity is in the urgent interest of everyone and place appropriate policy and economic focus on the need to restore and sustainably manage the natural resources that sustain us all.

Biodiversity is not a special interest area that is only of concern for one government department, the environment supports the entire economy. We trust that you will both understand that our economy is reliant on the natural world, not external to it, and will appreciate that restoration of biodiversity is in the urgent interest of everyone to maintain food supplies, restore soils, protect communities against flooding, secure clean and adequate water supplies, capture carbon, enhance our mental and physical health, and increase our resilience to the unavoidable impacts of a rapidly changing climate.

**Why is COP15 important?**

COP15 will take place in Montreal in December 2022, where the Parties will seek to agree a new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. COP15 is particularly important as it marks the first

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wwf.org.uk/globalfutures>

<sup>5</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6498/documents/70656/default/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/01/half-of-world-s-gdp-moderately-or-highly-dependent-on-nature-says-new-report/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/press/2022/01/biodivercities-initiative-set-to-transform-global-urban-infrastructure-by-2030/>

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conference since the Aichi Targets<sup>8</sup>, which consisted of a 10-year strategic plan (2010-2020) and 20 global targets to halt the loss of biodiversity and promote sustainable use of natural resources. Despite progress in some areas, none of the targets have been achieved at a global level<sup>9</sup> and biodiversity continues to decline at alarming rates.

COP15 has been delayed for two years due to COVID-19, so the post-2020 Framework to be agreed in Montreal will have only eight years to achieve the overarching aim of halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. This undertaking is at least as significant as the Paris targets on climate change, with similarly high stakes for society. Only by engaging fully at COP15 and beyond will an effective agreement be implemented to turn the tide on biodiversity loss.

### **How should Ireland act to help agree and deliver the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework?**

1. The Irish Government should adopt a leadership position on COP15, and the Taoiseach should attend the Montreal meeting in person to demonstrate that Ireland recognises the importance of the issue for the whole economy.
2. Ireland should push for a strong and legally binding agreement at COP15 that will deliver benefits for all Parties. Important issues such as recession and the spiralling cost of living should not be used to avoid or delay action on biodiversity loss, as to do so would only deepen such social and economic crises.
3. The Irish Government should fully resource and monitor the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework at a national level, taking an adaptive management approach to capitalise on lessons learned in implementing earlier targets.
4. Having declared a Biodiversity Emergency in 2019, the Irish Government should recognise this as a national priority and assess the impact of **all** policy, economic and social decisions in terms of their effects on nature, considering direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. This assessment must include both resident and migratory species.
5. The National Biodiversity Action Plan has implemented valuable objectives, such as mainstreaming biodiversity and restoring biodiversity in the wider countryside, but in the last interim review, published in 2020<sup>10</sup> there had been limited progress in 13 measures and only 8 had been completed (although some were ongoing measures). The new Plan currently being developed should address how these actions will be achieved.
6. The Irish Government should seek to ensure that, in line with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People<sup>11</sup> to which it is a signatory, it effectively protects a minimum of 30% of its land and marine habitats for the benefit of nature. In doing so, the Government should recognise that a large proportion (85%) of our protected sites are currently in unfavourable condition<sup>12</sup>. Favourable management must be brought in so protected areas are in good or recovering condition before it can be counted towards the target.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-spm-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Biodiversity Working Group (2020). *Interim Review of the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 -2021*

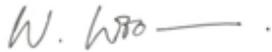
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/>

<sup>12</sup> Biodiversity Working Group (2020). *Interim Review of the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 -2021*

7. The Irish Government should work with the private sector, NGOs and other parties to mobilise financial resources to deliver the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. All harmful subsidies and incentives should cease and be diverted to activities which support the regeneration of nature.
8. The Irish Government should recognise that its obligations towards biodiversity do not end at its geographic borders but extend to its entire national value chain. Efforts to reduce the impacts on biodiversity of commodities imported by Ireland are needed, particularly for those affecting tropical forest and marine and coastal habitats.
9. The Irish Government should implement a mandatory requirement for corporations to report on their impacts on nature, in line with the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and aligned to climate disclosures.
10. The Irish Government should work collaboratively to support developing countries and indigenous people in the national supply chain to deliver on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and its 428 expert members in Ireland remain at the disposal of the Irish Government to provide advice and support in tackling this complex and urgent issue.

Respectfully,



Will Woodrow CEcol MCIEEM  
Vice-President (Ireland)